

REMARKS

Claims 1-5 are pending in this application; claims 1 and 5 being independent. In light of the remarks contained herein, Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration and withdrawal of the outstanding rejections.

In the outstanding Official Action, the Examiner rejected claims 1-5 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by *Owa et al.* (USP 6,348,971). Applicant respectfully traverses these rejections.

By this Amendment, Applicant has amended claims 1 and 5 without conceding the propriety of the Examiner's rejection, but merely to timely advance the prosecution of the present invention.

Claim Rejections - 35 U.S.C. § 102

With regard to the Examiner's rejection of claim 1 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by *Owa et al.*, the Examiner asserts the reference discloses an overall-workload detection unit, citing to S44 in Fig. 11; Fig. 9a; and col. 10, ll. 23-34. Applicant respectfully disagrees with the Examiner's characterization of this reference.

It is respectfully submitted that *Owa et al.* is directed to a printer selection device that selects an optimum printer for printing a document based on user information indicating such conditions as print commands and specifications, and based on printer information concerning print environments of the printers and causes the optimum printer to print the document (Abstract).

Fig. 9a depicts an example of a table referenced for configuring a printer driver in response to a printer state where a printer state management table is depicted. The printer state management table records print technology, printable color mode, print resolutions,

print speed, fed paper size, installed font type, option availability, etc., for each of the printers (PRNs) connected to the communication network 4.

The specifications and functions of the printers connected to the network can be known by looking at the printer state management table 51 (col. 10, ll. 23-34).

In contrast, the present invention as set forth in claim 1 recites, *inter alia*, a multiple-printer control apparatus for controlling a plurality of printers comprising an overall-workload detection unit for detecting the overall workload of printing to be performed using the plurality of printers. It is respectfully submitted that *Owa et al.* discloses consulting a printer state management table in order to determine which printer would be optimum for a printing job. *Owa et al.* fails to disclose, however, detecting overall workload of printing to be performed. As such, it is respectfully submitted that claim 1 is not anticipated by *Owa et al.* and, thus, it is respectfully requested that the outstanding rejection be withdrawn.

It is respectfully submitted that claims 2-4 are allowable at least for the reasons set forth above with regard to claim 1 based upon their dependency on claim 1. It is further respectfully submitted that claim 5 contains elements similar to those discussed above with regard to claim 1 and, thus, claim 5 is allowable over *Owa et al.* for the reasons set forth above with regard to claim 1.

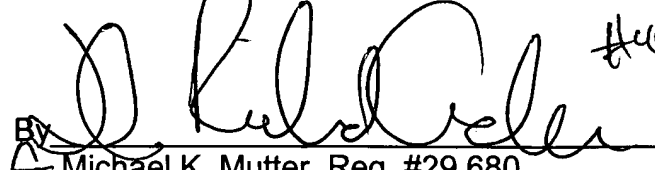
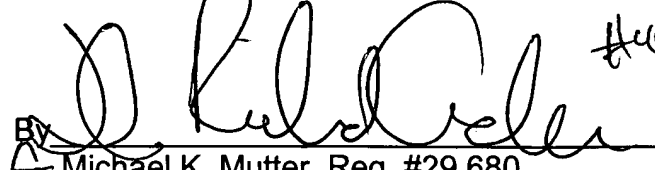
CONCLUSION

Should there be any outstanding matters that need to be resolved in the present application, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact Catherine M. Voisinnet (Reg. No. 52,327) at the telephone number of the undersigned listed below, to conduct an interview in an effort to expedite prosecution in connection with the present application.

If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies, to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16 or 1.17; particularly, extension of time fees.

Respectfully submitted,

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Attachment: Version With Markings to Show Changes Made

VERSION WITH MARKINGS TO SHOW CHANGES MADE

IN THE CLAIMS:

The claims have been amended as follows:

1. (Amended) A multiple-printer control apparatus for controlling a plurality of printers, comprising:

a print-processing capability detection unit for detecting print processing capability of each of the plurality of printers;

an overall-workload detection unit for detecting overall workload of printing to be performed using the plurality of printers; and

a printer control unit for performing control, on the basis of print processing capabilities detected by said print-processing capability detection unit and the overall workload detected by said overall-workload detection unit, in such a manner that print data, which represents at least one of images and characters to be printed, is applied to each of the plurality of printers, and each printer of the plurality of printers prints at least one of images and characters the number of sheets whereof conforms to a number of prints.

5. (Amended) A multiple-printer control method for controlling a plurality of printers, comprising the steps of:

detecting processing capability of each of the plurality of printers;

detecting overall workload of printing to be performed using the plurality of printers;

and

performing control on the basis of the detected print processing capabilities and overall workload in such a manner that print data, which represents at least one of the images and characters to be printed, is applied to each of the plurality of printers, and each printer of the plurality of printers prints at least one of images and characters the number of sheets whereof conforms to a number of prints.